THE NEW

# Wife of Bath,

Much better reformed, enlarged, and corrected than it was formerly in the old uncorrect Copy. With the addition of many other things.

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BRITISH
KUSKUL

IN Bath once dwelt a worthy wife,
Of whom brave Chaucer mention makes,
he lived a licentious life,
nd namely in venereal acts:
ut death did come for all her cracks,
When years were ſpent, and days out-driven
hen ſuddenly ſhe ſickneſs takes,
eceaſt forthwith and went to heaven.

But as ſhe went upon the way,
here followed her a certain guide;
nd kindly to her he did ſay,
Where mean you dame for to abide?
know you are the wife of Bath,
nd would not then that you go wrong,
or I'm your friend, and will be loth
hat you go through the narrow throng,
his way is broader, go with me,
nd very pleaſant is the way;
'll bring you there where you would be,
o with me, friend; ſay me not nay.

She looked on him, then did ſpier,
pray you, Sir, what is your name?
how me the way how you came here,
o tell to me it is no ſhame,
s that a favour about thy neck?
nd what is that upon thy ſide?
s it a bag or ſilver ſack?
What are ye then, where do ye bide?

I was a ſervant unto Chriſt,
nd Judas likewiſe is my name,
knew you by your collar firſt,
orſooth indeed ye are to blame;
our maſter did you not betray,

And

And hang'd yourſelf when you had done,
Wherefore your bid I will not ſtay,
Go then you knave let me alone.

Whatever I be, I'll be your guide,
Becauſe you know not well the way,
Will ye but once in me confide,
I'll do all friendſhip that I may.

What would you me, where do you dwell?
I have no will to go with thee;
I fear it is ſome lower cell,
I pray thee therefore let me be.

This is a ſtormy night and cold,
I'll bring you to a right warm inn;
Will ye go forward and behold,
And mend your pace till we win in;

I'm fear'd your inn will be too warm,
For too much hotneſs is not beſt,
Such hotneſs there may do me harm,
And keep me that I do not reſt,
I know your way it is to hell,
If you intend there for to go,
Good dame I will not you compell,
But I will go with you alſo.

Then down they went a right ſteep hill,
Where ſmoke and darkneſs did abound.
And pitch and ſulphur burned ſtill,
With yells and cries hell did reſound,
The fiend himſelf came to the gate,
And aſked him where he had been;
Do you not know and have forgot,
Seeking this wife could not be ſeen.

Good dame would you be here, he ſaid,
I pray you then tell me your name,

The wife of Bath ſince that you ſpeer,
But to come in I were to blame.

I will not have you here good dame,
For you were miſtreſs of the flyting;
If once within theſe gates ye come,
I will be troubled with your biting.
Cummer, gae back and [illegible] me be,
Here are too many of this rout,
For women lewd like unto thee,
I cannot turn my feet about.

Sir thief I ſay I ſhall bide out,
But goſſip was thou ne'er to me,
For to come in I'm not ſo ſtout,
And of my biting thou's be free.
But Lucifer what's that to thee?
Haſt thou no water in this place,
Thou look'ſt ſo black it ſeems to me,
Thou ne'er doſt waſh thy ugly face.

If we had water for to drink,
We would not care for waſhing then,
Into theſe flames and filthy ſtink,
We burn with fire unto the doom,
Upbraid me then good wife no more,
For firſt when I heard of thy name,
I knew thou had ſuch words in ſtore,
Would make the devil to think ſhame.

Forſooth, ſir thief you are to blame,
I had time now to abide,
Tho' you were well, but may think ſhame,

That

That loſt heaven for rebellious pride,
Who traitor-like fell with the reſt,
Becauſe thou would not be content;
And now of life are diſpoſſeſt,
Without all grace for to repent,
Thou madſt poor Eve for to conſent,
To eat of the forbidden tree,
Which we poor daughters may repent,
And makes us almoſt like to thee.
But God be bleſt who paſt thee by,
And did a Saviour provide,
For Adam's whole poſterity.
All thoſe who do in him confide,
Adieu falſe fiend I may not bide,
With thee I may no longer ſtay,
My God in death he was my guide,
O'er hell I'll get the victory.

Then up the hill the poor wife went,
Oppreſt with ſtinking flames and fear,
Weeping right ſore with great relent,
For to go elſe ſhe wiſt not where;
A narrow way with thorns and briars,
And full of myres was her before;
She ſighed oft with ſobs and tears,
The poor wife's heart was wondrous ſore,
Tir'd and torn ſhe went on ſtill,
Sometimes ſhe ſat and ſometimes fell;
Ay till ſhe came to a high hill,
And then ſhe looked back to hell.
When that ſhe had clamb up the hill,
Before her was a goodly plain:
When ſhe did reſt and wept her fill,
Then roſe and to her feet again,
Her heart was glad the way was good,
Up to the hill ſhe hy'd on haſte.

The flowers were fair where that she stood,
The fields were pleasant to her taste,
There then she spy'd Jerusalem,
On Zion's mount where that she stood,
Shining with gold like to the sun,
This silly soul then was right glad.
The ports were pearls shining bright,
Glorious it was for to behold,
With precious stones gave such a light.
The walls were of transparent gold,
High were the walls the gates were shut,
And long she thought for to be in,
But then for fear of biding out,
She knocked hard and made some din,

To knock and cry she did not spare,
Till father Adam did her hear,
Who is't that raps so loudly there;
Heaven cannot well be won by weir.

The Wife of Bath since that you speir,
Hath stood these two hours at the gate.

Go back (quoth he) thou must forbear,
Here may no sinners entrance get.

Adam (quoth she) I shall be in,
In spite of all such churls as thee;
Thou art the original of all sin,
By eating of the forbidden tree,
For which thou art not flyting free,
But for thy foul offences fled.

Adam went back and let her be,
Looking as if his nose had bled,
Then mother Eve did at him speir,
Who was it there that made such din?

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Thou art the original of all sin,
By eating of the forbidden tree,
For which thou art not flyting free,
But for thy foul offences fled.

Adam went back and let her be,
Looking as if his nose had bled,
Then mother Eve did at him speir,
Who was it there that made such din?

He ſaid a woman would be here;
For me I durſt not let her in,
I'll go (ſaid ſhe) and aſk her will,
Her company I would have fain,
But ay ſhe cry'd and knocked ſtill,
And in no ways ſhe would refrain.

Daughter, ſaid Eve, you will do well,
To come again another time,
Heaven is not won by ſword or ſteel,
Nor none that's guilty of a crime.

Mother (ſaid ſhe) the fault is thine,
That knocking here ſo long I ſtand,
Thy guilt is more by far than mine,
If thou wilt rightly underſtand,
Thou waſt the cauſe of all our ſin,
Wherein we're born and conceiv'd,
Our miſeries thou didſt begin,
By thee thy huſband was deceiv'd.

Eve then went back where Noah was,
And told him all how ſhe was blam'd
Of her great ſin and firſt treſpaſs,
Whereof ſhe was ſo much aſham'd.

Then Noah ſaid, I will go down,
And will forbid her that ſhe knock,
Go back (he ſaid) ye drunken lown,
You're none of the celeſtial flock.

Noah (ſhe ſaid) hold thou thy peace,
Where I drank ale thou didſt drink wine,
Diſcover'd was to thy diſgrace,
When thou waſt full like to a ſwine,
If I e'er drank I learn'd at thee,

For thou'rt the father and the first,
That others taught and likewise me,
To drink when as we had no thrist.

Then Noah in haste turn'd back with speed
And told the patriarch Abraham then,
How that the carling made him dread,
And all his deeds how she did ken.

Abraham she said, will ye but spare,
I hope you are not flyting free;
You of yourself had such a care,
Deny'd yourself and made a lie;
Then I pray you let me be,
For I repent of all my sin,
Do thou but open the gates to me,
And let me quietly come in.

Abraham went back to Jacob then,
And told his nephew how he sped,
How that of her nothing he wan;
He thought the carling was right mad,

Then down came Jacob through the close,
And said, go backward down to hell.

Jacob, quoth she, I know thy voice,
That gate pertaineth to thyself;
I thy old trumperies I can tell,
With two sisters thou ledst thy life
And the third part of the tribes twelve,
Thou gotst with maids besides thy wife;
And stole thy father's benniſon,
Ly by fraud thy brother frae,
Ve thou not him for veniſon,
Laid instead of baken ne;

Jacob himſelf was tickled ſo,
He went to Lot where he was lying,
And to the gate pray'd him to go,
To ſtaunch the carling of her crying.

Lot ſays, fair dame make leſs ado,
And come again another day,
Old harlot carle and drunken too,
Thou with thy own two daughters lay,
Of thine untimely ſeed I ſay,
Proceeded never good but ill

Poor Lot for ſhame he ſtole away,
And let the wife ſtill crack her fill,
Meek Moſes then went down at laſt,
To pacify the carlin then;
Now dame ſaid he knock not ſo faſt,
Your knocking will not let you ben.

Good Sir, ſhe ſaid, I am aghaſt,
When that I look you in the face,
If that your law till now had laſte,
Then ſurely I had ne'er got grace;
But Moſes, ſir, now by your leave,
Altho' in heaven ye be poſſeſt,
For all you ſaw did not believe,
But you in Horeb there tranſgreſt;
Where by all it is confeſt,
You got but once the land to ſee,
And in the mount was put to reſt,
And buried there where you did die.

Then Moſes meekly turned back;
And told his brother Aaron there,
How that the carlen did ſo crack,
And in no ways would him forbear.

Then

Then Moſes ſaid I will not ſwear,
But I'll conjure her as I can,
And I will make her now forbear,
So that ſhe ſhall not rap again.
Then Aaron ſaid, you whoriſh wife,
Go get you gone and rap no more;
With idols you have led your life,
Or then you ſhall repent it ſore.

Good Aaron prieſt I know you well,
The golden calf you may remember;
Who made the people plagues to feel,
This is of you recorded ever:
Your prieſthood now is nothing worth,
Chriſt is my only prieſt, and he,
My Lord who will not keep me forth,
So I'll be in deſpite of thee.

Then up ſtarts Samſon at the length,
Unto the gate apace came he,
To drive away the wife with ſtrength,
But all in vain, it could not be.

Samſon, quoth ſhe, the world may ſee,
Thou was a judge that prov'd unjuſt;
Thoſe gracious gifts that God gave thee,
Thou loſt them by licentious luſt;
From Delilah thy wicked wife,
Thy ſecrets could not thou refrain,
She daily ſought to take thy life,
Thou loſt thy ſight when thou was ſlain.
Though thou was ſtrong it was in vain,
Hunting with harlots here and there.

Then Samſon turned back again,
And with the wife would meet no more.

Then

Then ſaid King David, knock no more,
We are all troubled with thy cry,
David, quoth ſhe, why camſt thou here,
Thou mightſt bide out as well as I,
Thy deeds no way thou canſt deny,
Is not thy ſin far worſe than mine,
Who with Uriah's wife did lie,
And caus'd him to be murder'd ſyne.

Then Judith ſaid, who's there that knocks,
And to our neighbours gives theſe notes?

Madam, ſhe ſaid, let be your mocks,
I come not here for cutting throats;
I am a ſinner full of blots,
Yet thro' Chriſt's blood I ſhall be clean,
If thou and I were judg'd by votes,
The thing thou didſt was worſer done.

Then ſaid the ſapient Solomon,
Thou art a ſinner all men ſay,
Therefore our Saviour I ſuppoſe
Thee heavenly entrance will deny.

Remember, quoth ſhe, the latter day
What idol gods thou did up ſet,
And was ſo lewd in Venus plays,
Thou didſt thy Maker quite forget.

Then Jonah ſaid, fair dame content ye,
If ye intend to come to grace,
Ye muſt drie pennance and repent ye,
Ere ye can come within this place.

Jonah ſaid ſhe how ſtands the caſe?
How came you here to be with Chriſt?

How

How dare ye look him in the face?
Conſidering how ye broke your tryſt;
To God's errand thou withſtood him,
And held his counſel in diſdain,
The raven meſſenger thou plaidſt him,
And brought no anſwer back again.
With mercy thou was not content,
When that the Lord he did them ſpare,
Altho' the city did repent,
It grieved thee, thy heart was ſair,
Let me alone and ſpeak no more,
Go back again into the whale,
For how my heart is alſo ſore,
But yet I hope I ſhall prevail.

Good Jonah ſaid, crack on your fill,
For here I may no longer tarry,
Yea knock as long as e'er you will,
And go into the firie fairie.
Jonah, ſhe ſaid, you do miſcarry,
As I have done in former time,
You're not ſaint Peter nor ſaint Mary,
Thy blot's as black as ever mine.

So Jonah then he was aſham'd,
Becauſe he was not flyting free:
Of all his faults ſhe had him blam'd,
He left her then, and let her be.
Saint Thomas then I counſel thee,
To ſpeak unto this wicked wife,
She ſhames us all, and as for me,
Her like I never heard in life.

Thomas then ſaid, you make much ſtrife,
When you are out, and meikle din,
If you were here I'll lay my life,

No

No peace the saints would get within,
It is your trade for to be flyting,
Still in a fever as one raves,
No wonder tho' you wives be biting,
Your tongues were made of aspen leaves.

Thomas, quoth she, let be your taunts,
You play the pickthank I perceive,
Tho you be brother'd among the saints,
An unbelieving heart you have.
You brought our Lord unto the grave,
But wouldst no more with him remain,
And was the last of all the lave,
That did believe he rose again,
There might no doctrine do thee good,
No miracles make thee confide,
Till thou beheld Christ's wounds and blood
And putst thine hand into his side,
Didst thou not daily with him bide,
And sawst the wonders which he wrought,
But blest are they who do confide,
And do believe yet saw him nought.

Thomas, she says, will ye but speir,
If that my sister Magdalen,
Will come to me if she be here;
For comfort sure you give me none.

He was so blyth and turned back,
And thanked God that he was gone;
He had no will to hear her cracks,
But told it Mary Magdalen.

When that she heard her sister's mocks,
She went into the gate with speed,
And asked her who's there that knocks,
It's I the wife of Bath indeed.

She said, good mistress you must stand,
Till you be tried by tribulation,

Sister, said she, give me your hand,
Are we not both of one vocation?
It is not through your occupation,
That you are placed so divine,
My faith is fixed on Christ's passion;
My soul shall be as safe as thine,

Then Mary went away in haste,
The carling made her so asham'd,
She had no will of such a guest,
To lose her pains and be so blam'd.

Now good saint Paul, said Magdalen,
For I have done all that I can;
Sure if she were in hell, I doubt,
They would not keep her longer there,
Put to the gate would put her out,
And send her back to be elsewhere:

Then went the good apostle Paul,
To put the wife in better tune,
Wash off the filth that fills thy soul,
Then shall heaven's gate be open'd soon.

Remember Paul what thou hast done,
For all th'epistles thou didst compile,
Though now thou sittest up above,
Thou persecuted Christ a while

Woman he said thou art not right,
That which I did I did not know,
But thou didst sin with all thy might,
Until' the preachers did thee show.

Saint

Saint Paul she said it is not so,
I did not know so well as ye;
But I will to my Saviour go,
Who will his favour show to me:
You think you are of flyting free,
Because you was rapt up above,
But yet it was Christ's grace to thee,
And matchleſſneſs of his dear love.
Then Paul, she says, let Peter come,
If he be lying let him rise;
To whom I will confeſs my sins,
And let him quickly bring the keys,
Too long I stand, he'll let me in,
For why I cannot longer tarry,
Then shall you all be out of din,
For I must speak with good saint Mary.

The good apoſtle diſcontent,
Right suddenly he turned back,
For he did very much repent,
To hear the carlen proudly crack.
Paul says, good brother, now arise
And make an end of all this din,
And if so be you have the keys,
Open and let the carlen in.

The apoſtle Peter rose at laſt,
And to the gate with speed he hies;
Carling, quoth he, knock not so faſt,
You cumber Mary with your cries.

Peter she said, let Christ arise,
And grant me mercy in my need;
For why I ne'er deny'd him thrice,
As thou thyself has done indeed;

Then

Thou carling bold what's that to thee,
I got remiſſion for my ſin;
I coſt many ſad tears to me,
Before I enter'd here within.
It will not be thy meikle din,
Will cauſe heaven's gates to open'd be,
Thou muſt be purified of all ſin,
And of all ſins muſt be made free.

Saint Peter then no thanks to you,
That ſo you were rid of your fears,
It was Chriſt's gracious look I trow,
That made you weep thoſe bitter tears,
The door of mercy is not cloſ'd,
I may get mercy as well as ye,
It is not ſo as ye ſuppoſe,
I will be in, deſpite of thee.

But wicked wife it is too late,
Thou ſhouldſt have mourned on the earth,
Repentance now is out of date,
It ſhould have been before thy death,
Thou mighteſt then have turned wrath,
To mercy then, and mercy got,
But now the Lord is very loth,
And all thy cries not worth a jot,
Ah! Peter then what ſhall I do?
Hell will not have me as I hear;
Shall I deſpair of mercy too?
No, no, I truſt on mercy dear.
And if I periſh, here I'll ſtay,
And never go from heaven bright,
I ever hope and ever pray,
Till I get my Saviour's light.

Think indeed you are not right,

If

If you had faith you could win in,
Importune then with all your might,
Faith is the feet wherewith ye come,
It is the hands will hold him safe,
But a weak faith will not presume,
It will let you sink and be aghast,
Strongly believe or else undone.

But good saint Peter let me be,
Had you such faith, did it abound,
When you did walk upon the sea,
Was you not like for to be drown'd?
Had not our Saviour helped thee,
Who came and took thee by the hand,
So can my Lord do unto me,
And bring me to the promis'd land,
Is my faith weak, yet he is strong,
The same and ever shall remain,
His mercy lasts and his good will,
To bring me to his flock again.
He will me help and me relieve,
And will encrease my faith also,
If weakly I can but believe,
For from this place I'll never go.

But Peter said, how can that be?
How dar'st thou look him in the face,
Such horrid Sinners like to thee,
Can have no courage to get grace.
Here none comes in but them that's stout,
And suffer'd have for the good cause,
Like unto thee are keeped out,
For thou hast broke all Moses laws.

Peter, she said, I do appeal
From Moses and from thee also,

With him and you I'll not prevail,
But to my Saviour I will go;
Indeed of old you were right ſtout,
When you did cut off Malchus ear,
But after that you went about,
And a poor maid then did you fear.

Wherefore ſaint Peter now forbear,
A comforter indeed you're not,
Let me alone I do not fear,
Take home the wiſſel of your groat,
Was it your own or Paul's good ſword,
When that your courage was ſo keen,
You was right ſtout upon my word,
Then would you fain at fiſhing been;
For at the crowing of the cock,
You did deny your maſter thrice,
For all your ſtoutneſs turn'd a block,
Now flyte no more if ye be wiſe.

Yet at the laſt the Lord aroſe,
Environed with angels bright,
And to the wife in haſte he goes,
Deſir'd her ſoon paſs out of ſight.

O Lord, quoth ſhe, now do me right,
But not according to my ſin,
Have you not promis'd day and night,
When ſinners knock to let them in?

He ſaid, thou wreſts the ſcriptures wrong,
In whoredom thou haſt ſpent the day,
And to repent thou didſt delay;
Still my commandments thou abuſedſt,
And vice committedſt buſily,
Since thou my mercy then refuſed'ſt,

Go

Go down to hell eternally.

O Lord my ſoul doth teſtify,
That I have ſpent my time in vain,
O make a wand'ring ſheep of me,
And bring me to thy flock again.

Thinkſt thou there is no court to crave,
Of all thoſe gifts in thee was planted,
I gave thee beauty above the leave,
A pregnant wit thou never wanted.
Maſter, quoth ſhe, it muſt be granted,
My ſins are great, give me contrition,
The forlorn ſon when he repented,
Obtain'd his father's full remiſſion.

I ſpar'd my judgments many times,
And ſpiritual paſtors did thee lend,
But thou renew'dſt thy former crimes,
Ay more and more me to offend,
My Lord, qouth ſhe, I do amend,
Lamenting for my former vice,
The poor thief at his latter end,
For one word went to paradiſe.

The thief heard never of my teachings,
My heavenly precepts and my laws,
But thou was daily at my preachings,
Both heard and ſaw, and yet miſknaws.

Maſter, quoth ſhe, the ſcripture ſhews,
The Jewiſh woman which play'd the lown,
Conform unto the Jewiſh laws,
Was brought to thee to be put down,
But nevertheleſs thou letſt her go,
And made the Phariſees afraid,

Indeed ſays Chriſt it was right ſo,
And that my bidding was obey'd,
Woman ſaid he I may not caſt
The children's bread to dogs like thee,
Altho' my mercy ſtill does laſte,
Yet is there mercy none for thee,

But loving Lord may I preſume,
Poor worm that I may ſpeak again,
The dogs for hunger were undone,
And of the crumbs they were right fain,
Grant me one crumb then that does fall,
From thy beſt children's table Lord,
That I may be refreſht withal,
It will me help enough afford.

The gates of mercy are now clos'd,
And thou canſt hardly enter in,
'Tis not ſo as thou ſuppos'd
For thou art daily ſick in ſin.

'Tis true indeed my Lord moſt meek,
My ſore and ſickneſs I do feel,
But thou the lame didſt truly lead,
Who lay long at Betheſda's pool,
And many that never thee ſought,
Like to the poor Samaritan,
When thou into thy fold him brought,
Even as thou didſt the Widow of Nain,
Moſt gracious God did thou not bid,
All that were weary come to thee,
Behold I come even overlaid
With ſin ; have mercy upon me.

The iſſues of thy ſoul are great,
Thou art both leprous and unclean,

To

To be with me thou art unfit,
Go from me then, let me alone.

Let me thy garments only touch,
My bloody iſſue ſhall be whole;
It will not coſt thee very much
To ſave a poor diſtreſſed ſoul,
Speak thou the word, I ſhall be whole,
One look of thee will do me good,
Save now, O Lord, my ſilly ſoul,
Bought with thine own moſt precious blood.

Let me alone, none of my blood
Was ever ſhed for ſuch as thee,
It was my mercy, patience good,
Which from damnation made thee free.

It is confeſt thou hadſt been juſt,
Altho' thou hadſt condemned me,
But O thy mercy ſtill does laſte,
To ſave the ſoul that truſts in thee,
Let me not then condemned be,
Moſt humbly Lord I thee requeſt,
Of ſinners all now like to me,
So much the more thy praiſe ſhall laſte.

Thy praiſing me is not perfite.
My ſaints ſhall praiſe me evermore,
In ſinners I have no delight,
Such ſacrifice I do abhor.
Then ſhe unto the Lord did ſay,
At footſtool of thy grace I'll ly,
Sweet Lord my God ſay me not nay,
For if I periſh here I'll die.

Poor silly wretch now say no more,
Thy faith poor soul hath saved thee;
Enter now, go into thy glore,
And rest thro' all eternity——

How soon our Saviour these words said,
A long white robe to her was given.
And then the angels did her lead,
Straightway within the gates of heaven,
A laurel crown set on her head,
Spangled with rubies and with gold,
A white bright palm she likewise had,
Glorious it was for to behold;
Her face did shine like to the sun,
Like threads of gold her hair hang down,
Her eyes like lamps unto the moon,
Of precious stones rich was her crown,
Angels and saints did welcome her,
The heavenly choir did sing, rejoice,
King David with his harp was there;
The silver bells made a great noise,
Such music and such melody
Was never heard nor likewise seen,
When this poor saint was plac'd on high,
And of all sins made freely clean,
But then when she was possest,
And looked back on all her fears,
And that she was come to her rest,
Freed from her sins and and all her tears,
She from her head did take the crown,
Giving all praise to Christ on high,
And at his feet she laid it down,
For that the Lamb had made her free,
Now doth she sing triumphantly,
And shall rejoice for evermore,
O'er death and hell victoriously
With lasting pleasure laid in store,

## CONCLUSION.

Of Wife of Bath I make an end,
And do theſe lines with this conclude,
Let none their lives in ſin now ſpend,
But watch and pray, be doing good;
Deſpondent ſouls do not deſpair,
Repent and ſtill believe in Chriſt,
His mercies which laſte evermore,
Will ſave the ſouls that on him truſt.

FINIS.

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